

## CHAPTER IX

### MACAULAY'S TREATMENT OF IRISH HISTORY

MACAULAY devoted the latter part of the sixth chapter of his History to the government of James II in Ireland, and the whole of the twelfth and nearly all the sixteenth and seven-teenth chapters to the history of its reconquest by William. The narrative was brought down to the siege and treaty of Limerick, but thenceforth there is no systematic account of Irish affairs and such episodes as are mentioned are dealt with from the point of view of English politics.

Macaulay had a great disadvantage to contend with. There was no good history of Ireland in existence. Above all, there was no adequate account of the years 1660 to 1685 which would have supplied a solid foundation for the study of the years which followed. There were available Carte's Life of James Duke of Ormond, a collection of the state letters of the Earl of Orrery, the letters written by the Earl of Essex in 1675, and some other materials, but they left many points obscure. The few paragraphs Macaulay devotes to describing the aboriginal peasantry and aristocracy are very vague and rhetorical, and his account of the state of the English colony is vitiated by the failure to explain how or when English and Scotch settlers came to Ireland and how their ascendancy was maintained. He is content to assume that the dominion which

the English  
population exercised over the Irish <sup>f</sup> was the  
dominion of  
wealth over poverty, of knowledge over  
ignorance, of  
civilised over uncivilised man/ <sup>x</sup>

<sup>1</sup>II, 786 (vi).